(c) the advantages in case India joins the ITER; and

(d) what are the other nations who have already joined the ITER?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Madam. India was admitted to International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) negotiations in December, 2005 at a meeting of parties to ITER held at Jeju, South Korea.

(c) It will enable India to be a partner in development of fusion technology with shared costs.

(d) Apart from India, parties to ITER are China, Japan, EURATOM (European Atomic Energy Community), Russian Federation, South Korea and the USA.

Uranium project in Nalagonda (A.P.)

3489. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government have accorded environmental clearance to the uranium project proposed to be set-up in Nalagonda District and two other places;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the precautions that have been taken regarding (i) endanger people's health and (ii) degradation of environment; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) accorded environmental clearance for opening mines at Lambapur-Peddagattu in Nalgonda District of Andhra Pradesh in the month of-December, 2005. In March, 2005 it had accorded approval for setting up mines at Banduhurang and bagjata, both in the Singhbhum (East) district of Jharkhand State.

(c) and (d) Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL), a public sector undertaking under the Department of Atomic Energy will follow the conditions laid down by the MoEF while granting the clearance for

opening the mines. UCIL will also follow the norms prescribed by the respective State Pollution Control Boards and Atomic Energy Regulatory Board. The Health Physics Unit of the Bhabha Atomic research Centre (BARC) will establish Environmental Survey Laboratory to monitor relevant environmental parameters. All precautions will be taken with regard to health of surrounding population and protection of environment.

Supply of Uranium of Heavy Water Reactors

3490. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that india's nuclear power programme is heading for a crisis as natural uranium, the fuel that drives 13 Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRS) in the country, is in short supply;

(b) whether it is a fact that the load factor achieved by the nuclear power stations has come down due to non-availability of nuclear fuel as the development of domestice mines has not kept pace with addition of generating capacity; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take so as to provide enough supply of natural uranium for 13 PHWRS in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Uranium reserves in the country are adequate to support a Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR) capacity of about 10,000 MWe. The capacity of the 13 PH WRs currently in operation is only 3040 MWe. There is adequate uranium for the reactors in operation and also for those under construction. However, the operation of PHWRs at very high Plant Load Factors and completion of new projects ahead of the scheduled completion date by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), a Public Sector Enterprise of Department of Atomic Energy, has resulted in a temporary demand-supply mismatch.

(b) In addition to the 13 PHWRs (3040 MWe) in operation, 5 PHWRs (1420 MWe) are under construction and scheduled to start commercial operations in the next two years. With a view to conserve fuel for the entire PHWR capacity, these reactors are being operated at near normative levels of about 70% rather that at the high capacity factor of 90% which NPCIL had dearlier achieved.